

Post 11/20/65
Proliferating Tensions

Doubtless many participants in the White House Conference on International Cooperation are acutely aware of the tensions that frustrate more East-West cooperation. It is difficult at the moment to eliminate the causes of many of these tensions. When the Soviet Union complains that the war in Vietnam prevents new accords, the United States can justly reply that Communist championship of "wars of national liberation" is a major irritant to better relations.

There is one area, however, in which it may be possible to forestall additional tensions. A blue-ribbon panel on arms control reporting to the conference has recommended a three-year moratorium on deployment—not development as such—of the antimissile missile. This panel was under the chairmanship of Dr. Jerome B. Wiesner, former science assistant to the President, and included such experienced members as former Under Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric.

Its major argument is that embarkation by either the United States or the Soviet Union on a ballistic missile defense system "would almost certainly induce both superpowers to step up their strategic weapon programs in an effort to insure their respective 'deterrent' capabilities." This would be escalation to no purpose, since it probably would not add materially to security. There is, moreover, the matter of cost. The \$20 billion estimated bill for full realization of the Nike-X system would be only a starter if a new chapter in the arms race were opened. Altogether there are enough political questions to warrant a hold on actual production while research is continued, so long as the Soviet Union also shows restraint.

Indeed, this kind of control by mutual example seems more likely to succeed than the effort toward a nuclear nonproliferation treaty which the panel also urges. It is difficult not to be cynical about the practical chances for such a treaty. Whatever the symbolic value, the symbolism ought not to be pursued at the expense of the need for a nuclear understanding with Germany that would attempt to head off potential future proliferation of nuclear weapons. Although the panel's recitation of some of the inconsistencies in Germany's position are relevant, solid attempts to deal with the German nuclear problem ought not to be abandoned for a will o' the wisp.

At the same time, to the extent that Soviet fears of Germany are real and not mere propaganda, they might be relieved in some degree by non-aggression treaty between NATO and the Warsaw Pact powers. This would be considerably more pertinent than another panel recommendation that the nuclear powers pledge themselves generally not to use force across national boundaries, which could be quite unrealistic in view of continued Communist dedication to subversion.